O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL
INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE DEEMED TO BE
UNIVERSITY
A Private University Promoting Public Service

MANARA

Jindal India Institute
PROPELLING THE INDIAN CENTURY
O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



We Are Meant to Sing as One

Bhakti–Sufi Poetry *for a* Fractured World

Our Call to Action/Slogan: **Singing Oneness**

Jindal India Institute, O.P. Jindal Global University Delhi NCR, India

A student-led campaign, as part of the ***Manara Youth Coexistence Initiative***, responding to one of the most urgent challenges in contemporary India: the deepening Hindu–Muslim divide and the erosion of a shared moral and spiritual vocabulary of coexistence.

Our Goal

To soften rigid identity boundaries and to rebuild shared spaces of meaning across religious difference, enabling dialogue, reflection, and everyday practices of coexistence in a fractured public sphere.

How?

By engaging Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music—a historically rooted and wildly popular tradition that has long articulated visions of peace and unity beyond religious and social divisions.

Why Bhakti–Sufi?

Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music is a living tradition that draws upon the shared spiritual heritage of ***Bhakti*** (Hindu Devotionalism) and ***Sufism*** (Islamic Mysticism) and is continually renewed by younger generations through festivals, digital platforms, and popular media.

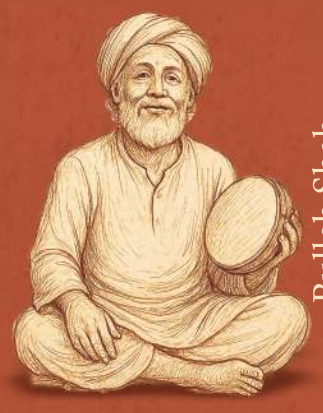
What We Do?

Through multiple experiential and non-confrontational methods — workshops, campus events, classroom engagement, art and creative production, and digital outreach—the ***campaign transforms poetry and music into practical tools for dialogue, reflection, and coexistence.***



Kabir

Check us out on



Bulleh Shah

Why this matters now?

As religious polarization intensifies in India's public sphere, younger generations need shared cultural languages through which coexistence can be imagined and practiced.

The Power of Poetry and Music

One can't get it without singing
It's far from one who can't sing
Whoever sung it with confidence
Found the truth within

Kabir
(Transl. Shabnam Virmani)

A Fractured Present

Problem

i Deepening Hindu–Muslim divide and mistrust.
ii Dominant public and political narratives of religious polarization.
iii Erosion of a shared spiritual and ethical vocabulary.



What happened?

i **Pre-colonial:** A complex history of conflict and coexistence but fluid religious boundaries and shared Bhakti–Sufi traditions shaped everyday religious life.
ii **Colonial:** Rigid religious identities were imposed through colonial governance and divide-and-rule policies.
iii **Partition:** Violence and mass displacement shattered shared religious and cultural worlds.
iv **Post-Partition:** Politicized identities hardened boundaries and marginalized syncretic traditions.

Our Intervention

To decolonize narratives of religious division by foregrounding India's hybrid Bhakti–Sufi traditions of coexistence.

Target Audience

Ages **18–30**
The Generation

16,000+
JGU Students

Other University Students in Delhi NCR

The Young Digital Public on Instagram

Poetry & Music Lovers, First Time Poets/Writers

The Generation

A watershed generation shaped by both everyday coexistence and rising polarization. Many carry lived experiences of migration, regional conflict, and communal tension, creating strong emotional motivation to engage with questions of identity, belonging, and the "other."

Participants are drawn to the opportunity to openly discuss issues that are rarely spoken about in everyday life, yet are constantly present—and deeply sensitive—within the social and public sphere.

Cognitively, **this group is open to critical reflection, non-confrontational alternatives to inherited religious binaries, and creative forms of expression, and is highly active across social media, campus events, and peer networks**.

The Campus

16,000+ students at O.P. Jindal Global University (Delhi NCR), **representing diverse regions, religions, castes, and socio-economic backgrounds. The campus provides both institutional openness and physical spaces for dialogue, creative experimentation, and public engagement**. Students have high access to live events, classrooms, and digital platforms, enabling multi-format outreach.

Alumni and online poetry enthusiasts who strongly align with the campaign's values

Motivated to translate ideas into action, they actively share, facilitate, and amplify content through cultural events, informal networks, and digital platforms, extending the campaign's reach beyond the university.







Our Research

Preliminary Research

Focus Group Discussions: Student workshops and discussions provided insights into the lived experiences of religious identity and differences.

What did we learn?

i Students expressed discomfort when speaking openly about religious identity and difference.

ii Shared traditions across religions were not immediately visible to many participants.

iii Political framing of religious identities often overshadowed personal or ethical perspectives.

iv When discussions were grounded in familiar historical traditions and well-known texts, resistance decreased noticeably and dialogue opened more easily.



Further Research

i **Market Analysis:** Students actively engage with Bhakti–Sufi–inspired music through festivals like Jashn-e-Rekhta, Jahan-e-Khusrau, Jashn-e-Dilli, and Jashn-e-Urdu, and bands such as Indian Ocean and Kabir Cafe, engaging with texts that explicitly articulate unity and synthesis across Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh traditions.

ii **Literature Review:** Research on Ajab Shahar (The Kabir Project) and Bhakti–Sufi poetry highlights their historical role as traditions of compassion, healing, and coexistence.

iii **Cultural and Social Impact Analysis:** Engagement within JGU's cross-electives and M.A. India Studies courses confirmed the pedagogical relevance of Bhakti–Sufi traditions for dialogue, peace building, and coexistence.

Symbolism of Our Mascot

an original artwork





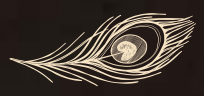
Whirling Dervish
representing
Movement Towards the One | Bliss
A turning toward unity where motion dissolves fixed distinctions, echoing the Sufi path of transcendence.

\+



Iktara
representing
One String | Infinite Resonance
One string, many sounds: a symbol of unity giving rise to diverse expressions.

\+



Krishna's Peacock Feather
representing
Joy | Mischief | Universal Beloved
Joyful devotion rooted in love, reaching beyond religious boundaries.

What We Set Out to Do

Goals

i Soften rigid boundaries between "Hinduism" and "Islam" by fostering deeper familiarity with their shared histories, theologies, and lived religious experiences through Bhakti–Sufi traditions.

ii Encourage students to critically reflect on their own identities and how these are shaped in relation to religious boundaries and their notion of the 'other'.

iii Create a safe, non-confrontational space where personal experiences and public discourses on religion, identity, and coexistence can be openly discussed.

iv Re-introduce Bhakti–Sufi poetry as a long-standing syncretic tradition in India, highlighting its contemporary relevance as a cultural and ethical resource.

v Empower students to become active ***Ambassadors of Oneness***, promoting creative, everyday practices of coexistence within and beyond the university.

Why Bhakti–Sufi Poetry & Music Works?

A Shared Cultural Language

Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music emerged between the 13th and 18th centuries through Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh saint-poets who openly challenged religious boundaries. Their verses circulated in public spaces and remain revered across communities, forming a shared ethical and emotional vocabulary.

A Living Tradition

This thousand-year tradition of dohas and qawwalis is still sung, reinterpreted, and widely consumed today. Working through poetry and music, it opens emotional space for difficult conversations without confrontation or defensiveness.

Culturally Embedded, Broadly Accessible

Bhakti–Sufi traditions belong simultaneously to temples, gurdwaras, and dargahs—and to contemporary popular culture. Familiar texts and musical forms lower entry barriers while sustaining deep ethical and historical meaning.

Joyful and Contemporary

Uplifting and participatory rather than argumentative, the tradition invites people in. Today, young audiences actively engage with Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music through festivals, digital platforms, and popular media.

From Tradition to Action

What is needed is not invention but illumination: bringing existing texts and practices to the foreground of public conversation, and enabling students to engage with them as living tools for coexistence.

Hindus, Muslims—where did they come from?
Who set them on this path?
Search within, search your heart and look:
Who made heaven come to be?
Fool, throw away that book, and sing of Him.

Kabir

(Transl. John Stratton Hawley)

Project Strengths

i **Culturally Embedded, Emotionally Resonant Medium**

Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music carry deep emotional resonance across communities, combining low entry barriers through familiar texts and melodies with significant ethical and historical depth.

ii **Non-Confrontational Pathway to Dialogue**

As a poetic and musical medium, the project enables open engagement with sensitive religious and social issues without defensiveness, allowing dialogue to emerge organically.

iii **Hybrid Academic–Cultural Model**

The campaign bridges classroom learning and public cultural spaces, integrating academic inquiry with lived, creative participation beyond formal curricula.

iv **Strong Networks and Collaborative Potential**

Based in the Delhi NCR region, the project benefits from robust institutional support and cultural ecosystems. The popularity and accessibility of the medium make it easy to build partnerships both within and beyond the university.

v **Student-Led, Sustainable Creative Infrastructure**

Driven by student leadership and ownership, the project operates through low-cost, scalable formats and produces tangible cultural outputs, including a student-led magazine, ensuring long-term continuity.

Partnerships & Collective Strength

Building Allies of Coexistence

Strong campaigns are built through collaborations and partneships. *Singing Oneness* draws its strength from a diverse ecosystem of institutional, cultural, creative, and individual partners, each extending the project's reach, depth, and public impact.

Cultural Partners

Main Local Partner

Dillipoetry — spoken-word platforms and workshops fostering inclusive dialogue.

Archival Resource Collaborator

The Kabir Project (Ajab Shahar) — archival translations, music, and recordings grounding the campaign in historical depth.

Student-Led Partner Initiatives

Soapdales & Juliet Roze — student-run soap and bakery initiatives contributing to outreach and everyday, community-based engagement.

Building Allies of Coexistence

Individual Expert Collaborators



Rachit Sharma
Poet & Founder,
Dillipoetry

Poetry Facilitation



Sumeet Anand
Dhrupad Vocalist of the
Darbhanga Tradition



Priya Kanungo
Hindustani Classical Vocalist
Professor of Performing Arts, JGU

Classical Vocal Performances



Joydeep Mukherjee
Digital Artist,
JGU

Visual Identity and Design

Future Prospective Collaborations

In the coming semester, ***Singing Oneness*** plans to pursue the following collaborations:

Dr. Neelima Shukla Bhatt
Religion and South Asia Studies (Wellesley College);
Network of Hinduism in Dialogue (OCHS).

The Qawwali Project
by Manjuri Chaturvedi
Founder of Sufi Kathak

The Kabir Project
Full Collaboration for
Classroom Teaching

Putting Coexistence into Practice *Offline*

Implementation Tactics

High-Visibility Campus Launch: A public pop-up exhibition aligned with ***Biswamil*** (JGU's Cultural Festival), engaging over 15,000 students.

Tangible Campaign Assets: Postcards circulated to foster belonging and connection.

Experiential In-Person Programming:

i **Religious Coexistence and Self-Reflection Workshop**, held on **13th October 2025**, titled "Interactive Visual Journey & Community Discussion on Bhakti–Sufi Pathways to Unity and Coexistence," aimed to challenge "us versus them" thinking and help students recognize coexistence as an inherent human value.

ii **Make Poetry, Make Peace: A Bhakti–Sufi Poetry Writing Workshop**, held on **14th October 2025** in collaboration with **Dillipoetry**, aimed to reignite and put into practice the meaning of coexistence through creative expression.

iii **Koffee with Kabir with Dr. Sumeet Anand**, held on **3rd November 2025**, was a student-led open mic event where participants shared their personal experiences and original poetry, reflecting on the learnings from the previous two workshops. The students engaged wholeheartedly, making the session meaningful and vibrant without requiring facilitation.

> *The title is a deliberate play on "Koffee with Karan." As the famous Indian show sparks celebrity gossip, "Koffee with Kabir" sparks inner seeing and movement towards the One.*

iv **A Public Lecture & Interactive Visual Journey titled "Singing Oneness: An Introduction to Religious Syncretism in India"** was conducted by **Prof. Raghav Dua** for students of **Hanoi Law University, Vietnam** on 14th January 2026, alongside engagements on Bhakti–Sufi poetry.

v **Upcoming (February 2026):** "A Light for Unity and Coexistence: Religious Differences and Singing Oneness in India" (03 Feb), "The Yellow Shawl of Basant: A Springtime Story of Love, Unity, and Syncretism" (Feb, exact date TBD) and much more.

Classroom Integration: As part of the public campaign, Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music are being integrated into **credit-bearing on-campus and online courses** at O.P. Jindal Global University to promote peace, unity, and coexistence.

External Outreach & Partnerships: Collaboration with artists, musicians, scholars, and cultural practitioners.

Public Visibility: A targeted media press release.

Putting Coexistence into Practice *Online & In Between*

Digital Community Building

The campaign centered on Instagram as its primary digital platform—the most relevant space for students in this age group in India. Through poetry, music, translations, event documentation, visuals, and thematic posts, we created an active online commons that extended the campaign beyond campus and enabled broad, peer-driven engagement.

Online Poetry Competition: *Writing as Action*

The poetry competition functioned as the campaign's core call to action.

Drawing inspiration from Bhakti–Sufi saint-poets, whose verses openly challenged religious boundaries and rigid identities, we approached writing and translation as acts of courageous public intervention with real-world impact.

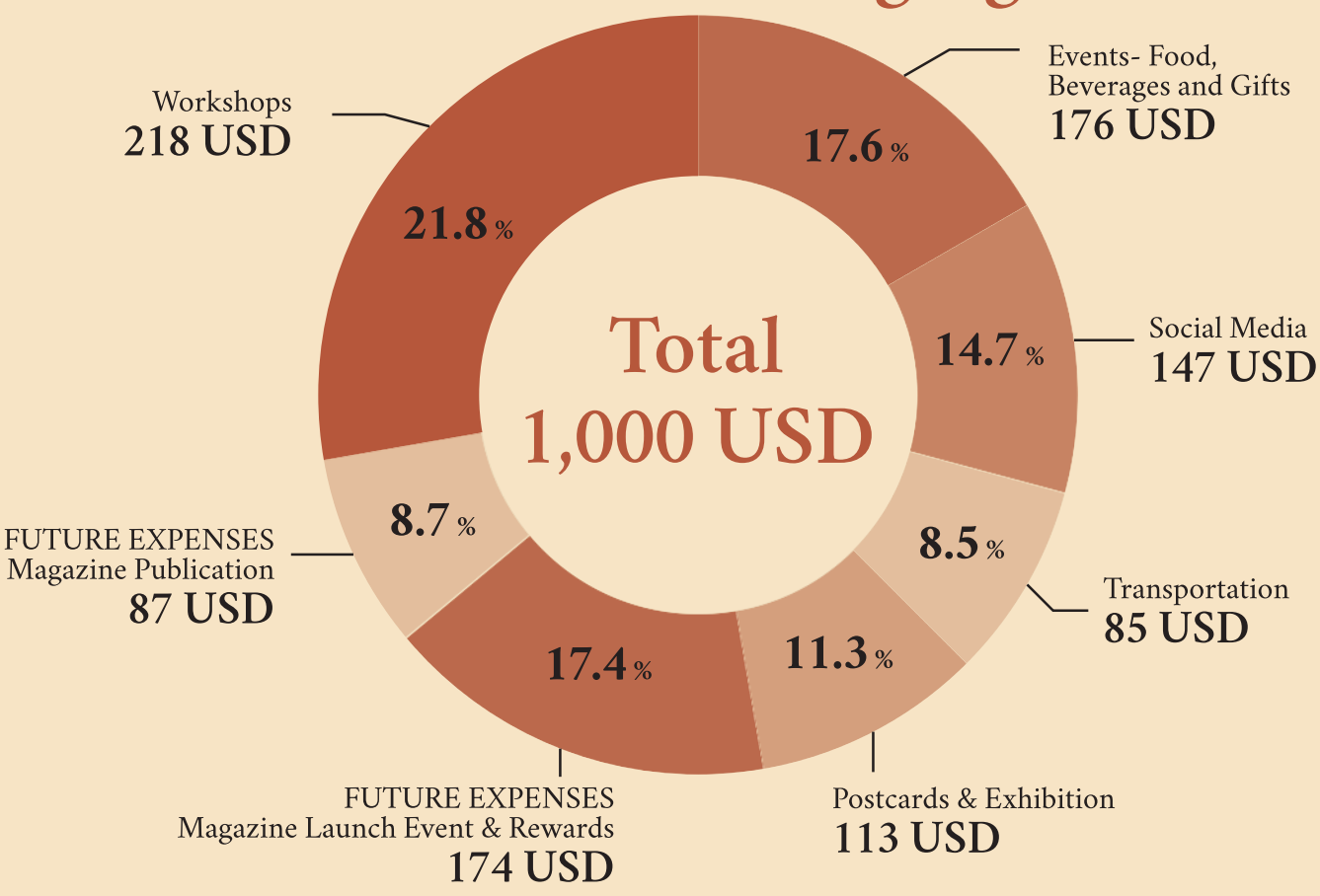
Translation became a form of ownership: translating a text makes it one's own. Writing about coexistence required participants to locate the theme within their own lives. Once shared, poems enter the public sphere—circulating, resonating, and reaching new audiences.

The competition amplified the campaign's visibility and will lead to the launch of ***Singing Oneness: Poems for a Fractured World***, the first student-led magazine dedicated to Bhakti–Sufi poetry and art.

Magazine: From Digital Participation to Lasting Cultural Form

The launch of ***Singing Oneness: Poems for a Fractured World***, JGU's first student-led magazine dedicated to Bhakti–Sufi poetry and art, marked the campaign's transition from digital engagement to tangible cultural legacy. The inaugural edition received 329 poetry submissions in 6 languages, reflecting wide and diverse participation. From these, 20 poets were selected, whose works move from online circulation into a printed, enduring form—transforming collective creative action into a shared cultural archive.

Amount Invested in Singing Oneness



Amount Invested In	Percentage	Amount (in USD)
Workshops	21.8%	218
Events- Food, Beverages and Gifts	17.6%	176
Social Media	14.7%	147
Transportation	8.5%	85
Postcards & Exhibition	11.3%	113
Magazine Launch Event & Rewards (Future Expenses)	17.4%	174
Magazine Publication (Future Expenses)	8.7%	87
TOTAL		**1,000 USD**

Every Dollar had Impact

VALUE
- Cultural outputs
- Community networks
- Identity reflection
- Narrative shift

TANGIBLE ASSETS
- Student-led magazine
- Events & workshops
- Social Media Growth
- Visual & archival content

INTANGIBLE ASSETS
- Inclusive vocabulary
- Trust & emotional safety
- Plural identity formation
- Community ownership

LEGACY & SUSTAINBILITY
- Magazine as permanent resource
- Ambassadors of Oneness
- Digital content archive
- Classroom integration

Challenges & Adaptation: Testing, Learning, and Revising

i Timing of Creative Interventions

What we learned: We introduced the poetry-writing workshop too early, before the campaign narrative and community were fully formed.

What we would do differently: We would first build familiarity and trust through listening sessions, music, and informal engagement, and introduce writing workshops at a later, more mature stage of the campaign.

ii Experiential vs. Explanatory Framing

What we learned: Early informational or instructional approaches ("teaching" about coexistence) generated less engagement than expected.

How we adapted: Midway through the campaign, we shifted toward experiential formats—music, guided listening, creative writing, and participation—which significantly deepened engagement.

What we would do differently: We would adopt this experiential approach from the outset, allowing students to arrive at insights through lived experience rather than explanation.

iii Digital Strategy & Skill-Building

What we learned: We were unable to recruit a dedicated student for digital engagement and initially lacked social media expertise.

How we adapted: The team took ownership of the digital strategy, learning through experimentation and hands-on practice. While this required more time initially, it resulted in a strong Instagram presence (~2,000 followers) and built internal capacity.

What we would do differently: We would plan earlier for structured digital skill-building, but we now recognize the value of being self-sufficient and less dependent on external support.

iv Navigating Political Sensitivities

What we learned: Addressing religious coexistence on a large campus quickly intersects with political interpretations, particularly around the framing of Hindu–Muslim relations.

How we adapted: We refined our language and framing, shifting emphasis from division to shared cultural traditions, creativity, and lived experience.

What we would do differently: From the outset, we would foreground affirmative narratives of unity and cultural continuity, allowing the project's message to circulate with greater openness within an academic institutional context.

Team


Harnoor Kaur Uppal


Jasleen Kaur


Prerna Singh


Michal Erlich


Raghav Dua

Evaluation Matrix

Offline Engagement

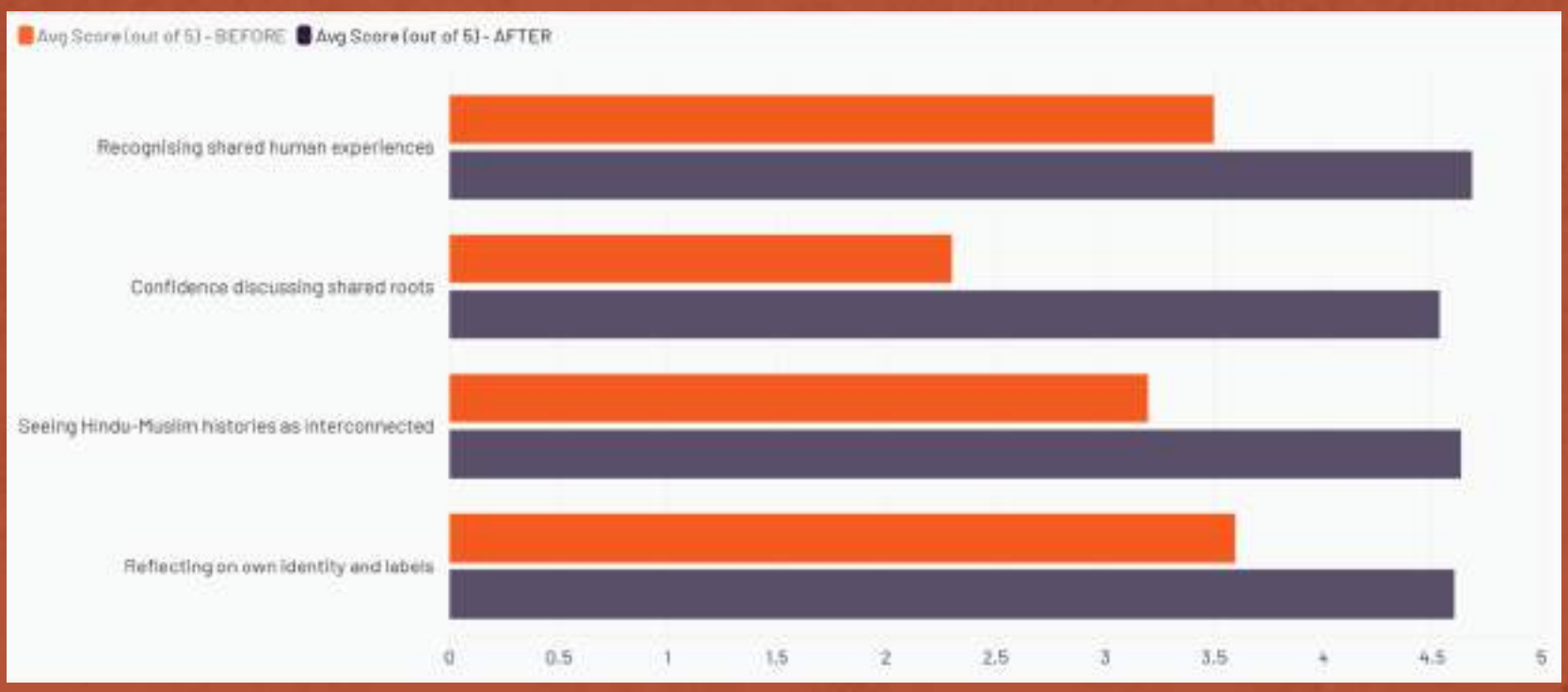
5,000+
students
Exposure on campus

500+
Students came in direct contact with the campaign

150+
Workshop Participants

Classroom Integrations (UG & PG): Multiple courses across disciplines

99
Feedback Forms Collected in the Offline Phase



Change in attitude after offline engagement (based on 99 responses)

Creative Participation

329
Poetry submissions received

6 Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Hebrew, & English
Languages Represented

20 from all over the country
Poets selected for publication

Singing Oneness: Poems for a Fractured World: Magazine Scheduled for Launched

Digital Reach: Instagram

1,950+
8 October 2025 to 28 January 2026
Followers

9,00,000+
Total views Generated

1,200+
Direct Messages

25+
(Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Jaipur, etc.)
Organic Collaborations

474,280
Accounts Reached

Not everything can be measured…

i **Discursive Shift:** Greater ease and nuance in students' spoken and written engagement with religious identity and coexistence.

ii **Pedagogical & Dialogic Impact:** Bhakti–Sufi poetry enabled open discussion across classrooms and facilitated dialogue spaces.

iii **Student Leadership:** Student-led initiatives and Ambassadors of Oneness extended the campaign's values in and beyond the campus.

iv **Sustained Digital Community:** An active Instagram community remains a living space for ongoing creative exchange and dialogue.

v **Cultural Milestone:** Launch of ***Singing Oneness: Poems for a Fractured World***, the first student magazine for Bhakti–Sufi–inspired poetry and art.

Future: Scalability & Sustainability

Growing Digital Community
A steadily expanding online presence that enables continued dialogue, creative exchange, and participation beyond the campus.

Ambassadors of Singing Oneness
A core group of approximately 30 engaged students formed on campus, alongside online allies and cultural influencers. Together, they act as local connectors, facilitators, and carriers of the project's values in diverse contexts.

Academic Continuity
Plans for a dedicated academic course that explores coexistence through lived traditions, combining classical Bhakti–Sufi sources with contemporary popular expressions. This ensures long-term integration within the university's teaching framework.

Low Cost, High Reach
The project operates with minimal financial input while drawing on abundant existing cultural, academic, and human resources—making it easily scalable and replicable across institutions.

Annual Student Magazine
The 1ST Singing Oneness magazine will be unveiled on 26 February at a celebratory public event featuring certificate awards, commemorative mementos, lectures, and live performances, establishing it as an annual cultural and creative platform.

Our long-term vision is rooted in the belief that these shared texts and music carry the power to reshape public discourse in India—by recalling a common history, theology, and philosophy that predates division. Through poetry, we remember what has been obscured, and enable a growing community to carry forward practices of coexistence already taking shape around the campaign.

Replicability: A Toolkit for Other Universities
Our campaign functions as a flexible, student-led toolkit that can be adapted across university contexts. It includes modular workshops for dialogue and reflection, a digital archive of Bhakti–Sufi poetry and music, and an open-access magazine model for creative expression. Together, these low-cost components enable easy replication while allowing institutions to reimagine the campaign locally.

What's Happening Next?

Kabir Wala
A Coexistence GPT



Singing Oneness: Sufi-Bhakti Poetry for a Fractured World
Full Elective Course by
Prof. Raghav Dua
August 2026 Onwards



Singing Oneness: Qawwali as a Peace Practice
Our Official Entry to
MYCI 2026-27
Bridges of Coexistence